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ABSTRACT

This document contains a brief bibliography of peer-reviewed literature, with abstracts, on grandparenting. It is one of 12 bibliographies on aging prepared by the National Agricultural Library for its "Pathfinders" series of publications. Topics covered by the other 11 bibliographies include aging parents, adult children, dementia and Alzheimer's disease in the elderly (written for educators), dementia and Alzheimer's disease in the elderly (written for consumers), family caregiving, family support networks, humor in later life, intergenerational relationships, living arrangements in later life, pets and the elderly, and sibling relationships in adulthood. This bibliography on grandparenting contains citations for 22 books and articles for researchers and educators, and 4 books and articles for consumers. It concludes with a list of organizations that readers may contact for further assistance. (NB)

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FEBRUARY 1990

GRANDPARENTING

PREPARED BY BILLIE H. FRAZIER, Ph.D., CFLE**

This PATHFINDER has been prepared to help researchers, educators and consumers increase their understanding of the significance and role of grandparenting in today's society.

RESEARCHER/EDUCATOR

"Active and Latent Functions of Grandparenting During the Divorce Process," Colleen Leahy Johnson. The Gerontologist, 28(2):185-191, 1988.

Longitudinal data on the role of grandmothers during the divorce process of their children are reported. Most women provide major assistance, but younger grandmothers are more actively involved. Paternal grandmothers show the greatest decline in assistance over time. Grandmothers prefer to provide social and recreational supports on a voluntary basis and avoid assuming parental functions.

"Age and Sex Differences in Perceptions of Grandparenting," Jeanne L. Thomas. Journal of Gerontology, 41(3):417-423, 1986.

Age and sex differences in grandparenting satisfaction and in perceived grandparenting responsibilities were investigated. Results indicate that relatively young grandparents express greater responsibility to offer childrearing advice, regardless of grandchildren's ages. Grandfathers endorsed relatively high levels of responsibility for grandchildren's care and for offering childrearing advice, regardless of number of grandchildren or of grandchildren's ages. Grandmothers expressed relatively high levels of satisfaction with grandparenting, regardless of grandchildren's ages.

This PATHFINDER lists significant resources that are judged to be accurate, readable and available. Opinions expressed in the publication do not reflect views of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The National Agricultural Library is located at Beltsville, Maryland 20705

GPO 907-729

"Becoming a Grandparent," Sarah Cunningham-Burley. Aging and Society, 6(4):453-470, December 1986.

This study explores the meaning and significance of becoming a grandparent. Sections include why grandparenthood has been a neglected area of research, the process of becoming a grandparent, the meaning and significance of being a grandparent, and problems involved in studying grandparenthood.

"Contemporary Grandparenthood: A Systemic Transition," Jetse Sprey and Sarah H. Matthews. Annuals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 464: 91-103, November 1982.

Meaning associated with grandparenthood comes from outside the boundaries of the original nuclear family through alliances initiated and produced by offspring. Ages of both parenting and grandparenting are important variables affecting transition. From a systems perspective, the grandparent-grandchild bond is initially mediated by parents. With time, the bond becomes more direct.

"Demographic Change and the Life Course: Some Emerging Trends in the Family Realm," Gunhild O. Hagestad. Family Relations, 37 (4):405-410, October 1988.

This article cites evidence that grandparents serve important stabilizing functions in the wider family system and provide a wide range of support to children and grandchildren in times of crisis. Grandparents bolster their children in the parent role through encouragement and emotional support.

Family Strengths, Nick Stinnett. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1980.

This book contains a study, "Young Children's Perceptions of Grandmother" in which the author recommends viewing grandparenthood as a part of a group process which involves interaction between three or four generations. Professionals and family members can foster the development of a network of supportive bonds to increase enjoyment between generations and to strengthen family life in general.

"The Grandparent/Grandchild Relationship: Family Resource in an Era of Voluntary Bonds," Chrystal C. Ramirez Barranti. Family Relations, 34(3):343-352, July 1985.

A study of the grandparent/grandchild relationship relative to the older adult, the middle generation, and the grandchild is reported. The role of grandparents as a potential family resource is discussed, and implications for family life programming are suggested.

Grandparenthood, Vern Bengtson and Joan F. Robertson (eds.). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1985.

This is a collection of articles by sociologists and other researchers who have made important contributions to the knowledge base on grandparenting. Four themes are dominant throughout the book: (1) grandparenthood as a symbolic role; (2) diversity in grandparental experiences; (3) divorce and grandparental relationships and, (4) the "new social contract" which divests grandparents of strong ties with their families. Several articles refer to the importance of grandparents and their role as family watchdog/gatekeeper. Some even say the "decline" of American families is due to lack of effective grandparenting.

"Grandparenthood, Life Review, and Psychosocial Development," Helen Q. Kivnick. Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 12(3-4):63-81, 1988.

This document describes grandparenthood in terms of five dimensions: (1) centrality, (2) valued elder, (3) immortality through clan, (4) reinvolvement with personal past, and (5) indulgence. Grandparenthood stimulates the process of life review, which in turn, facilitates psychosocial integration.

"Grandparents: A Study of Their Role in Hispanic Families," Emily Israel Raphael. Physical and Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics, 6(3/4):31-62, 1988.

This report of a pilot project describes the role and activities of grandparents in a lower income New York City Hispanic community. Three parts of the study include a comparison of Hispanic and Caucasian grandparents, an exploration of models from gerontological and grandparenthood literature, and a discussion of the therapeutic potential of grandparenting activities.

"Grandparents' Visitation Rights: Hearing on S. Con. Res. 40", U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Separation of Power, Washington, D.C., 1984.

A congressional hearing of the United States Senate in the ninety-eighth congress is documented. The idea that a uniform state act be developed and adopted which provides grandparents with adequate rights to petition state courts for privileges to visit their grandchildren following dissolution of the marriage of the grandchildren's parents.

"The Influence of Grandparents on Grandchildren: A Review of the Literature and Resources," Thomas E. Denham and Craig W. Smith. Family Relations, 38:345-350, 1989.

Increasing interest is being directed toward the role of grandparents and their influence on children's development and welfare. The authors provide a review of the literature and resources which may be used by family life educators and counselors to help grandparents enhance relationships with their grandchildren. The symbolic, indirect, and direct influences of grandparents and the impact of grandparental influence on children are discussed.

"Intergenerational Families," Lenora Isaacs. The Journal of Aging and Judaism, 2(2):84-93, Winter 1987.

This presentation was given at a conference entitled, "The Synagogue Confronts the Jewish Family of the 21st Century". It includes small group discussion questions that were used. Topics include what it means to be a grandparent, and a couple of different characterizations of grandparenting styles.

"Jewish Grandparenting and the Intergenerational Connection: Summary of Proceedings", Yehuda Rosenman and Gladys Rosen. New York, NY: The American Jewish Committee, 1984.

Research findings presented at the reported conference emphasize that increased longevity has made grandparenting a mass experience with implications for an aging Jewish community. Summaries of individual presentations help sensitize the American Jewish community to the vital importance of the intergenerational connection that can lead to the establishment of a communal network for sharing ideas and programs that will benefit grandparents, parents and grandchildren.

"Meaning and Significance of Great-Grandparenthood," Kenneth J. Doka and Mary Ellen Mertz. The Gerontologist, 28(2):192-197, 1988.

Most grandparents who are interviewed about the meaning and significance of great-grandparenthood find the role to be significant and emotionally fulfilling. It provides a sense of personal and family renewal, diversion, and a mark of longevity. Two styles of great-grandparenthood are identified, remote and close. The experiences of great-grandparenthood are quite similar to grandparenthood.

"The Meaning of Grandparents' Day Cards: An Analysis of the Intergenerational Network," Roberta R. Greene and Jirina S. Polivka. Family Relations, 34(2):221-225, April 1985.

Content analysis of a sample of 110 Grandparents' Day cards is reported. A physical portrayal of grandparents seems to be avoided. Instead, cards project grandparents as benign, non-powerful figures. Joyous themes and superlatives are typically used. Cards do not tend to express personal commitment.

The New American Grandparent: A Place in the Family, A Life Apart. Andrew J. Cherlin and Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1986.

Two leading sociologists examine the role of grandparents in contemporary American society. Major themes woven throughout the book include the desire by grandparents for "a place in the family and a life apart," and the "norm of noninterference."

"Older Women's Perceptions of Great-Grandmotherhood: A Research Note," Gloria J. Wentowski. The Gerontologist, 25(6):593-596, 1985.

The anthropological study examines whether great-grandmotherhood is a kinship role with new content or whether the role of grandmother serves as a model. Results indicate that subjects model their behavior on their earlier role of grandmother, but advanced age and lack of geographic proximity restrict their ability to carry it out in the same way. Great-grandmothers feel removed from the fourth generation. The women think of themselves first as mothers and grandmothers, and second as great-grandmothers.

"Perceived Changes in Grandmother-Grandchild Relations Following a Child's Separation or Divorce," James W. Gladstone. The Gerontologist, 28(1):66-72, 1988.

An investigation of grandmothers' interaction with grandchildren, pre-and post-marital breakdown, is reported. The study reveals that contact between grandmothers and their grandchildren increases following divorce. Participating in commercial recreation, providing babysitting, teaching family history and tradition increases as well. Personal advice given to grandchildren also increases following the disruption of the child's marriage. With rising rates of marriage breakdown, answers to the questions raised in this study take on special meaning.

"Stepgrandparents and Grandparents: The View from Young Adults," Gregory F. Sanders and Debra W. Trygstad. Family Relations, 38(1):71-75, January 1989.

Young adult college students describe their relationship with either their stepgrandparent or grandparent. Between-group comparisons are made regarding the: amount of contact; satisfaction and importance of contact; social and personal roles; expected behaviors; family strengths; and parental influence.

"The Transition to Grandparenthood: Unexplored Issues," Gunhild O. Hagestad and Mary E. Lang. Journal of Family Issues, 7(2):115-130, June 1986.

This article describes how recent demographic change has affected the prevalence, timing, and sequencing of the transition to grandparenthood on a societal level. It reviews the literature on entry into grandparenthood and identifies the unexplored issues related to the personal and interpersonal significance of the transition.

"The Use of the Elderly As Surrogate Parents: A Clinical Perspective," Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 3(1):3-15, Fall 1980.

The role of grandparent is considered from a clinical perspective. Data support the literature which indicates that grandparenting styles are idiosyncratic and that the grandparent role is valued according to how the personal needs of grandparents are fulfilled.

Between Parents and Grandparents, Arthur Kornhaber. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1986.

The author of this book is the founder of an organization for grandparent' rights. The nature of the grandparent-grandchild relationship is examined. Special attention is given to special problems that can arise between parents and grandparents. A course of action in resolving conflicts is suggested.

The Grandparents' Catalog, Charles S. Slaybaugh. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1986.

This idea book for family sharing includes hundreds of projects and activities to delight both grandparents and grandchildren. It reinforces the importance of grandparents in the growth and happiness of children and young people.

How to Grandparent, Fitzhugh Dodson and Paula Reuben. New York, New York: Signet Printing, 1984.

The book is divided into three sections: (1) Becoming A Grandparent, (2) Ages and stages, and (3) Special Aspects of Grandparenting. The appendix includes guides on toys and play equipment, children's books and records, and books on parenting for grandparents.

"That Special Joy: Being a Grandparent," Bard Lindeman. 50 Plus, 25(11):16-18, November 1985.

Results of a reader poll are presented. The author states the results indicate that the topic of grandparenting needs more attention in the magazine. A pledge is made to provide additional coverage in future editions.

CONTACT FOR ASSISTANCE

County Cooperative Extension Service (under county government in telephone book)

Family science, aging, human development, education or psychology department at a state college or university

County adult education departments

Local library

Foster Grandparent Program
1100 Vermont Avenue, NW
Room 6100
Washington, D.C. 20525
(202) 634-9355

National Council on the Aging, Inc.
600 Maryland Avenue, SW
West Wing 100
Washington, D.C. 20024
(202) 479-1200

American Association of Retired Persons
1909 K. Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20024
(202) 479-1200

This PATHFINDER resulted from the author's research at the National Agricultural Library while on sabbatical leave from The University of Maryland during the summer and fall of 1989. Using database searches of AGRICOLA, Psycinfo, Social Scisearch, ERIC, Family Resources and Dissertation Abstracts International, relevant references were reviewed and annotated. It is authored by:

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